

# NEWSRELEASE

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Power outage hits correctional facilities**

DEER LODGE – A power outage in the Deer Lodge Valley on Thursday morning forced correctional facilities to rely on emergency generators for several hours. The outage affected Montana State Prison, Montana Correctional Enterprises operations, including the dairy, and the Treasure State Correctional Training Center.

Power was lost about 5:30 a.m. and restored at 2 p.m. Twelve back-up generators maintained electricity for essential services at the prison, such as refrigerated food storage, infirmary and operations and security systems. An emergency generator also supplied power to the Treasure State facility, which is a boot camp.

Security at the facilities was maintained as inmates were restricted in their activities. They spent most of the day in their cells, except for outdoor recreation and to eat meals. Inmate work assignments, education and other programming were canceled. Support staff filled in for inmates in preparing and serving meals.

Visitation was canceled for Thursday. Because full power is not expected to be restored until Saturday, visitation will be canceled Friday and Saturday as well.

Because electricity was restored on a makeshift and limited basis, prison officials restricted consumption to essential needs such as food service, perimeter lighting, infirmary, heat and hot water in the housing units, dairy, and coolers and freezers for food storage. Officials had to carefully balance power consumption so as to not exceed the limited supply.

The dairy, which is in the process of obtaining a generator, did not have the ability to milk its 365 cows until power was restored. The dairy's milking operation resumed in later afternoon when officials determined the milking machinery could be safely operated while other power demands were low. A 200-kilowatt generator was expected to arrive from Billings by early evening to provide the electricity needed to run the around-the-clock milking operation until Northwestern Energy could replace the failed transformer that caused the outage.

(more)

Deputy Warden Ross Warden said, "The staff at Montana State Prison deserves thanks for its cooperation in maintaining necessary prison operations. NorthWestern Energy crews did a wonderful job of getting power restored as quickly as possible."

He said, "Security remains our No. 1 priority and we will provide additional perimeter security and have taken all necessary precautions to ensure a safe and orderly operation during this time."

The prison has about 1,460 inmates and boot camp has 56 offenders.

People wanting more information can call Montana State Prison's emergency information hotline at 1-888-739-9122.

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